

MOBILIZING THE CHURCH FOR CRISIS INTERVENTION

This paper will develop some basic step-by-step guidelines for mobilizing a church for crisis intervention. Mobilization for crisis intervention will help the church fulfill the divine directives to love one another,¹ to love one's neighbor,² and to love one's enemies.³ Benevolent crisis intervention also will open doors for speaking God's word of grace and the good news of Jesus to those who are trapped in sin. Thus, the goal of crisis intervention—regardless of the type of crisis, either “situational,” “developmental,” or “existential”—can be viewed as twofold: (1) to meet the individual's immediate need(s), and (2) to meet the individual's deeper, spiritual need(s).⁴

Step One—Teaching. The church's basis for crisis intervention is God's own intervention in the world through the person of Jesus. The crisis of sin caused God to so act. In order to be like their father in heaven,⁵ believers must imitate or model God's helpful intervention in a world disrupted by sin. As a body composed of a variety of important and necessary parts, the church

¹That is “bear one another's burdens,” Galatians 6:2.

²The people of the immediate community, see Luke 10:25-37.

³See Matthew 5:43-48.

⁴This process is summarized nicely by the subtitle of a book by Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981); compare Harvey Conn's subtitle, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982).

⁵See Matthew 5:48 and 1 Peter 1:14-16.

must utilize every available person in this intervention process. The goal of restoring broken persons to wholeness demands no less than total involvement of the church's functioning ministries. God, as a result, will be glorified by a healthy, growing body of believers.

Step one, then, is to communicate these important foundational concepts to the congregation. The church must know what it is and what it needs to be doing. A series of lessons—either sermons or classes—with group discussion could be used effectively. An example of lessons from the book of Ephesians follows.

The Demonstration of God's Kindness (1:3-14)
Goals of Intervention: Transformation (2:1-10)
Goals of Intervention: Reconciliation (2:11-22)
Goals of Intervention: Communication (3:1-13)
No Limitation (3:14-21)
Bases of Intervention: Togetherness (4:1-6)
Bases of Intervention: Giftedness (4:7-16)
Bases of Intervention: Newness (4:17-24)
Results of Intervention: A Change in Life-style (4:25-5:21)
Results of Intervention: A Change in Relationships (5:22-6:9)
Strength for the Struggle (6:10-20)

Part Two--Evaluating. In preparation for crisis intervention mobilization, three areas need to be evaluated: (1) the needs of the local community; (2) the existing resources of the local community;⁶ and (3) the resources of the church.⁷ This evaluation will help the congregation develop the relevant crisis intervention program(s).

⁶For example, helping professionals, agencies, special programs, etc.

⁷What abilities and training experiences in the church are available to be used?

Part Three--Structuring. The precise form(s) of crisis intervention ministry will depend on the needs of the community and the resources of the church. Some needs—based on “developmental” crises—are constant, and programs can be structured accordingly, such as family life groups, youth programs, parenting and childbirth groups, and senior citizens programs. Other needs will vary from place to place and from time to time, and programs must be adapted. Examples would be unemployment, severe illness and death, drug addiction, disabling events, natural disasters, sexual problems, violence, etc. Different structures of intervention can be employed to cope with different problems—group therapy, helping teams, individual counseling, support groups, prayer chains, power chains, referral, hot lines, or contact programs.

Part Four--Training. If certain community needs cannot be met with the resources of the church, then training is necessary. If the church is devoid of helping resources and much training is needed, then the various needs of both church and community must be ranked according to priority, that is, in relationship to the ultimate goals and purposes of the church. The minister can use his time effectively by training a few who will in turn train others and so on. On-the-job training also should be used.

Part Five--Implementing. Where caring people are concerned about real needs and understand both the nature of the problem(s) and the effective way(s) of coping, then implementation should be no difficult task. Strong leadership, however, is a plus. A few key figures in a church who demonstrate actively the effect of God’s grace and God’s sacrificial *agape* (“love”) can kindle a fire among cold, lifeless coals.